WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

VOL. I.] AUGUST, 1885. [No. 8.

"ST. PAUL ON RETRIBUTION."

Some of our readers may remember an article from the pen of the Rev. Austin Phelps, D.D. which appeared a few months ago under the above title in the *Independent.* Its general purpose was to show that this apostle, in his writings, assumes that those to whom he wrote were perfectly familiar with the severe teachings of Jesus concerning the doom of sinful men, and that the apostle's silences, as well as his allusions to this wrath to come, prove this. He claims that, while the doctrine of an eternal hell-torment is not prominent in the apostle's teaching, it is everywhere assumed. His explanation of this lack of distinctive testimony is that the eschatological teaching of our Lord had been generally diffused and accepted. The doctrine of everlasting punishment, as set forth "in terrific symbols" by Jesus was a thing "fixed and familiar in the beliefs" of the men to whom St. Paul wrote. And therefore, as Prof. Phelps would have us believe, nothing was to be expected from him but quiet assumption of its truth and "casual allusion." To this we beg leave to reply:

1. This endeavor to account for the apostle's reticence fails at the point where an explanation is most needed. It does not apply in the case of the promiscuous assem-

blies to whom Paul *preached.* They were not familiar with the words of Jesus.

When men, like the rude Lycaonians, or like the cultured skeptics at Athens, were hearing for the first time about Christ and the Christian view of man's destiny, we might expect the most definite testimonies concerning the wrath to come. And yet no such prominence is given in any of the sermons reported in the Acts, including those of St. Peter, to this phase of Christian teaching. If the awful fate were overhanging men, which *we* assume to be taught in Jesus' words, the absence of more emphatic warnings of it in these first gospel messages is at least strange. St. Paul does not present in them to his hearers the doctrine of everlasting punishment as we would expect him to have presented it, if his conception of our Lord's teaching had been that which Prof. Phelps assumes it was.

2. Equally unsatisfactory is the digest given in his article of the teaching of St. Paul's epistles upon this subject. What the writer says about the "trial" of all men, as taught in the Epistle to the Romans, and the wrath consequent upon their disobedience, is only partly true. He does not state, what the apostle further teaches, that under this "fair trial" all men stand condemned before God. Still less does he show how the apostle teaches in the fifth chapter that the relation of the race to the first man is such that this sad failure was inevitable.*

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* The attempt to seek a justification for the prevalent view of endless torment on the ground that all men, whether gospel hearers or not, are now put upon the ground of "fair trial" for eternal life will have to be abandoned. It is neither reasonable nor scriptural. It certainly is not Paul's doctrine

But the over abounding grace of God has brought greater blessing to the race in the Second Adam than it lost in the first. That this blessing is something far greater than a mere " chance," against tremendous odds, in an infinitely hazardous trial, is plainly implied in this fifth chapter and more than implied in the eleventh, in which the apostle discusses the mystery of God's dealings with all mankind, Jew and Gentile, in this dark discipline of evil, and declares that " He hath shut them all up in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all." Prof. Phelps should have balanced therefore this more hopeful teaching over against the dark forebodings of endless wrath to which, in the view of human trial he is led to take from this epistle, the vast majority of men must be doomed.

3. The allusions he gathers from the epistles to the Thessalonians and elsewhere to the retributions to be ushered in with "the day of the Lord," while fairly presenting one aspect of the apostle's teaching, do not present the whole of it. His quotations need to be paralleled by other passages which give glimpses of far reach-

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that all men have either a natural or a gracious ability given them to keep the law of God. He teaches that the race was put upon its trial in the first man, and that, by his sin, it was condemned to death, This death is spiritual as well as natural. There can be no " fair trial " under these conditions. Probation is over and judgment passed. There is indeed a kind of probation to which hearers of the Gospel are subjected. But to the present moral discipline of the race as such the word *probation* does not apply. It is rather an education, into which the punishment which men have incurred enters as an element. The grace of God has interfered, not to enable men to escape this punishment, but to convert it into a means of blessing to those who learn at the cross to accept this sentence of death against themselves, and who receive Christ as their life.

ing purposes of grace toward the children of men. St. Paul writes to Timothy of his trust "in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." He exhorts him to see that, in the churches, "giving of thanks be made for all men"; for the man Christ Jesus has given himself "a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times." To the Ephesians he speaks of the hidden purpose of God "in the dispensation of the fullness of times" to gather together "in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth"; and to the Colossians, of this same purpose "to reconcile all things unto himself;" while to the Philippians, "things under the Earth" are joined with those in heaven and in earth as hereafter to be made submissive to the name of Jesus, whom every tongue shall confess to be the Lord.

We would by no means regard these passages as teaching Universalism. And yet, we are persuaded, they give a more universal and merciful aspect to the divine scheme of salvation than would be admissible, if the damnatory passages are to be received as the sole teaching concerning the destiny of wicked men. There can be no doubt that these two parallel lines of divine dealing run all through the Scriptures, judgment and redemption. We have been constantly refusing to accept the redemption passages, in their full and proper meaning, because we could not reconcile them with other passages which speak of coming wrath. We are all more or less in bondage to some "system of divinity." And we are ever cramping what the Word of God teaches within its boundaries. Our complaint against Prof. Phelps' presentation of St.

Paul's doctrine is that he gives us only one side of the apostle's teaching about human destiny and the far reaching results of that redemption plan, in which there is expressed a love surpassing knowledge and filling all God's fullness.

4. Still more objectionable is his use of certain texts in the epistle to the Hebrews. Admitting, as does he, that its theology is Pauline, whatever may be the truth about its authorship, we yet beg to remind him that its damnatory passages are all based upon God's judicial dealings with Israel. It is His mode of dealing with His *people* that is in view all through the epistle. It is of them that it is written that " it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It is *Our* God, who is a consuming fire. God's dealings in wrath with His ancient people did not contemplate their endless destruction. They were disciplinary and restorative. So we are not to understand these passages, which threaten us with even sorer punishment, as looking forward to an eternal damnation, but to such " destruction of the flesh " as may tend to the salvation of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus. Some Christians must needs be saved " so as by fire." And it would be a great gain to them, as well as for the cause of truth, if they would understand that God's way of salvation is not *from* judgment for sin, but *through* judgment. It is to them that St. Paul declares (Gal. vi: 7, 8.) that " God is not mocked," and that " whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." If *they* sow to the flesh they must of the flesh reap corruption. Much of our laxity in Christian living is due to this easy trans-

ference to unbelievers of threatened judgments addressed to us, and which only self-judgment can avert. The teaching in Hebrews is that "the Lord shall judge His people." But even such sore chastisement, the twelfth chapter teaches, is a proof of His faithful love. All of which goes to show that we shall never understand the great problem of human destiny, as presented in the Scriptures, by the study of its damnatory passages apart from their relations, and apart from the whole system of revealed truth.

We are persuaded that whenever light shall come to the church upon this dark subject it will be through the recognition of these principles :

1. As the wages of sin is Death, the consignment of wicked men to the "everlasting fire" is essentially a death sentence.

2. This judgment must be one in harmony with the great law of Nature, by which defective and degraded forms of being are ever being dissolved by her consuming energy.

3. Resurrection, which is recovery to life from this death, is the great redemption blessing brought to mankind in Christ.

4. This redemption is universal, in so far as that "all shall be made alive."

5. The resurrection of the unjust is therefore included within the scope of this "hope toward God." (Acts, xxiv: 15.)

6. While the resurrection of the just is virtually now accomplished, in that they have eternal life in Christ, the unjust must abide long under bondage to death, "spirits

in prison." They have no part in the first resurrection.

7. When at last recovered from this captivity, their resurrection must be "unto judgment." It cannot be unto eternal life, nor unto complete deliverance from bondage to corruption. The only form of manhood that rises above all such bondage is that which is conformed to the risen Christ.

8. Resurrection therefore, while it is essentially a redemptive process, is also a sorting process. According to 2nd Cor. v: 10, "every one must receive *in his body* according to the things he did, whether good or bad."

9. A defective embodiment, which garners up the fruit of previous sinful character, does not involve the loss of all good of existence, nor of the possibilities of future blessing.

10. It must bring with it, however, liability to a "second death" and to the hazards of that final fiery trial, which must purge away all that is defective in the old creation and introduce the light and glory of the new.

The *Congregationalist*, in noticing this magazine, describes it as "emphasizing the special importance and meaning of the doctrine of the resurrection." This well defines our leading aim. If the doctrine of the resurrection were put in its right place, it would reconcile the discrepancies in our systems of theology, and especially would it illumine the darkness of modern eschatology. And so it would tend to bring together the scattered divisions of the one Church into "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE.

REDEMPTION THROUGH RESURRECTION.

(*Continued.*)

Passing on to the Prophets, we find many similar promises of release from a captivity, the roots of which lie in the realms of death. The promises, however, become less personal. The nation's bondage is more in view. But as we have already seen from Isaiah xxv, and Hosea xiii, only a ransom from Sheol can fully meet the case. Such a deliverance is proclaimed in Isaiah. xxvi: 14–19, a passage which speaks plainly of resurrection from death, as even rationalistic interpreters admit. The prophet had just declared that the judgments, by which Jehovah would restore His people and bless all nations, would be carried on to this climax,—" He will swallow up death in victory." (xxv: 8.) A careful reading of the whole of the magnificent prophecy, (Chs. xxv.–xxvii.), shows that there is before the writer's mind the burden of woes under which, not only Israel, but all the earth's inhabitants suffer. And the deliverance foreseen is as wide as the misery. And yet it comes " in the way of judgments." (xxvi: 8.) Only in this way will " the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." (v. 9.) If favor be shown to the wicked, he will not learn righteousness. (v. 10.) Therefore Jehovah's hand must be lifted up against him in judgment. The fire of His enemies must devour them. (v. 11.) They must go down to death. Their condition is thus described. " Dead, they shall not live; Rephaim (shades) they shall not

rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." (v. 14.) This removal of all the ends of the Earth * had enlarged the nation of Israel, that is, it had given it wide scope for the accomplishment of its mission. (v. 15.) At the same time it had compelled these banished ones to cry in their trouble unto the Lord for relief. (v. 16.) The mission of Israel to the world was Messianic. That nation was raised up to bring to mankind the salvation for which it cries. Like a woman with child the nation had been pregnant with this great boon. Its sorrows had been its parturition pangs. (v. 17.) And yet it had not wrought deliverance in the earth, neither for itself nor for the nations. "The inhabitants of the world had not fallen," that is they had not been subdued to Israel's God. (v. 18.) And then comes the announcement of redemption for Israel, whose mission had ended in failure, and for mankind, through resurrection. "Thy dead shall live, my dead body they shall arise." The Lord here asserts His property in them, foreshadowing His identification with them in Christ, who went down to death with and for them. The ransom from death of His people, the first fruits, should be as dew upon the dust of the earth in which all the dead lie buried. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs (Heb. "lights," *i e.* vivifying dew.). And the land of the Rephaim thou wilt cause to fall." †

* That is, of its inhabitants into Sheol. The italics in the English version obscure the sense.

† The English version reads "And the earth shall cast out the dead." The form of the Hebrew verb and the collocation of the words are such that either rendering is admissible.

(v. 19.) The verb is the same as at the close of v. 18. Hence, Young gives it a similar rendering. The idea is that, while the inhabitants of the world had not fallen before Israel and Israel's Lord, yet, as captives in Sheol, they should be forced to confess His name. The resurrection grace and power which should some day reach Israel, would finally subdue and rescue them. This deliverance, however, could only be in the way of judgment: and hence Jehovah invites His people to shelter themselves from the coming storm of His indignation, which should beat upon the earth's inhabitants, the issue of which would be that the earth should disclose her blood and no more cover her slain. (vs. 20. 21.) How deep this work of judgment would be the next verse brings to view—"In that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan, the piercing serpent: even Leviathan that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." (xxvii: 1) We have already seen that this passage foretells judgment upon "him that hath the power of death, that is the devil." The whole scope of the prophecy accords with what we have in view in this essay, which is to show that, from Moses onward, all his holy prophets foretell a triumph over His enemies and over death and hell which shall bring salvation to Israel and to all mankind. In the passage we have been reviewing we detect a principle, more fully unfolded in the New Testament and of which we shall have much to say hereafter, that this salvation reaches *first* His people, who are made the mediums of wider blessing. We shall also see that it has respect to previous character, and that it is a harvest in which every man must reap as he has sown. But at this point we

fasten attention simply upon the great principle that, guilty as all men are on account of sin and worthy of death, there is a class of spiritual enemies behind them, involved in the guilt, who must share in its punishment, and for whom there is preparing a final overthrow that shall bring to all men at least this blessing, rescue from the power of death. The dead stock of Israel "shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit." (v. 6.)

We urge then our readers to bring to bear upon the interpretation of the numerous passages of this class these considerations.

1. Israel and all nations, by the righteous judgments of God, have been consigned to Sheol. They suffer under this worst of all captivities, bondage to death.

2. God has wrought for them a redemption which proceeds in the way of judgment upon themselves, their enemies, seen and unseen, and over the empire of death which holds them captive. The meaning of the word "captivity" is at once broadened in this view. "The perishing in the land of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt" (v. 13.) are at once seen to be typical of the victims of a real and lasting captivity in the land of death, for whom "the great trumpet shall be blown." The people "robbed and spoiled," "snared in holes," "hid in prison houses," "a prey whom none delivereth," "a spoil, of whom none saith, restore," (Is. xlii: 22.) are the people who are bound in the prison-house of death. And to such comes the promise (xliii: 1.) "But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou

art mine." Neither the waters nor the floods nor the flames should destroy them. (v. 2.) "I even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour." We again repeat that we have no desire to strip these passages of their spiritual meaning, nor deny to them any reference to Israel's spiritual bondage and subsequent conversion. Spiritual death, as the New Testament constantly affirms, is one in essence with bodily death. The last is a deeper and more fatal bondage than the first, but the captivity and degradation are the same in kind. We maintain, however, that we shall fall far short of their meaning if we *limit* these passages to the lesser evil, and see in them no promise of redemption from the greater. Indeed, we shall mistake in our whole interpretation of the Old Testament, if the light that guides us is not that of "the hope of the resurrection of the dead." It is only on the other side of death that the splendid promises that glow along these pages of Isaiah can find fulfilment. For the men to whom they were made are long since dead. They never realized the promised salvation. They "died without the sight." Israel missed the blessing himself, and failed to become the instrument of it to all mankind. But Israel, (and this name includes the Messiah, the First Born of that princely seed which has power with God and prevails) on the other side of death and in the power of resurrection, shall realize and accomplish this deliverance. Plain do these promises become if we allow them their full and proper scope.

Another such occurs in Is. xlix: 5–10. Jehovah commissions His "servant" to raise up the tribes of

Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel, and to be His salvation unto the end of the earth, to be a covenant of the people, to raise up the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages ; "To say to the prisoners go forth, to them that are in darkness, be uncovered. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them." The quotation of the latter verse in the Revelation (viii: 16.) makes it clear that the promised deliverance reaches beyond the grave, and harmonizes with all that we have said concerning the meaning of the "captivity" so often alluded to. The unbound "prisoners" are the released from Sheol. They are again referred to in the 25th verse. The question of the possibility of such a deliverance is raised in the 24th verse. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" The next verse replies, "But thus saith Jehovah. Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

Again we say, if we limit such words to release from Babylon, or even from spiritual bondage, we shall fall far short of their meaning. "When God says so much He cannot mean so little." No release which does not provide for and include the exiles in Sheol, where the vast majority of the nation were gathered, and which does not wound the head of their chief enemy and avenger, could meet the case or fulfil the terms of the

promise. In the next chapter we hear Jehovah again declaring that though the heavens and earth must fade away and "they that dwell therein must *die in like manner,*" yet "His salvation shall be forever (unto all generations. v. 8. R. V.) and His righteousness shall not be abolished." (li: 6.) He stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. The huge grinding wheels of nature, under which all the earth's inhabitants are ground out in death, are subject to His will who is Lord of Creation and of Life. And therefore He asks exultingly, why His people should fear continually every day the fury of the oppressor, as if he were able to destroy. "And where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth to be loosed, that he die not in the pit, nor that his bread should fail." (vs. 13, 14.) That is, he dreads death, as if this enemy would put him beyond the help of even the Maker of heaven and earth. And so Jehovah appeals to His former wonder-working in behalf of his people, smiting Rahab, (Egypt, type of Sheol,) wounding the dragon, and drying up the sea. (v. 10.) And so they need not fear that even death can put them beyond the redeeming power of the Lord, their God, "the Lord of hosts is His name" (v. 15.)

PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS.

In the judgment-scene of Matt. xxv: 31--46, those on the left hand are consigned to "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." This is one of the most prominent features of the description. And yet it is commonly

ignored, or else remanded to the misty realm of unintelligible metaphor, where its meaning disappears in the fog. And yet so important is it that we are persuaded that a right understanding of it would furnish a key to the interpretation of the whole passage.

First, with regard to the "devil and his angels," we accept it as a first principle of the interpretation of these terms that they describe agencies or powers connected with this present system of Nature. We believe that the devil is more than a principle of evil. It is the plain teaching of Scripture that he is a person. We believe, moreover, that the Universe is pervaded by living, personal powers, who, under God, carry on its operations, and who are closely connected with what we call the forces of nature. The names which science gives to these forces, such as gravitation, heat, electricity etc., do not define them. These names only express the forms though which certain unknown powers are always operating in this created system. Scripture describes these energies by names which indicate that they are living and personal. It names them "Angels, principalities and powers." It teaches also that among these powers there are those whose agency is evil. It refers the blight and venom and decay and death which we all recognize in the kingdom of nature to these evil powers. It represents Satan as the "prince of the power of the air," as "him that hath the power of death." *A fortiori* he must have power over those noxious influences which produce death. It describes our Saviour's miracles of healing as wrought for the relief of those "who were oppressed of the devil." (Acts x: 38.) The deaf and dumb, the epileptic, the lun-

atic are said to be possessed with evil spirits or "devils." A woman bowed with infirmity was bound by Satan. When the Lord sent out His disciples He gave them power to cast out devils, to heal diseases, to tread on serpents and "over all the power of the enemy." These references to the devil's agency are sufficient to assure us that he is active in the whole sphere of physical as well as moral evil. Indeed the two are but differing sides of the one curse of evil which pervades the whole of this present order. And of this evil dominion the devil is the prince.

The point upon which we would now insist is that his evil work pertains to this natural system. We all recognize the presence of some great power of evil through the whole realm of nature, as well as in men's hearts. This power Scripture calls "the devil."

2. But it is also a prime truth of Scripture that this created system has been redeemed, and hence that this evil power is to be cast out of it and destroyed. It is the crime and unbelief of the world to view this present natural system as perfect in itself, and as having no need of renovation. Naturalism is the age-long foe of Christianity. Scripture views the system, however, as imperfect and transitory. It is now so constituted as to be for man an arena of trial and conflict. He is being trained here for a higher sphere and a nobler life. But this present fashion of the world is to pass away. There shall be a new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Hence this age-long power of evil, who has fastened his yoke of bondage upon the creature, must be destroyed. This is the goal of redemption. Therefore there is a fire

prepared for him. The term "fire" stands in Scripture for that consuming energy by which nature is ever dissolving her effete and worthless forms. It is her grand agent of liberation and purgation. In an important sense this eternal fire burns continually. It is a fact of the present. It is all the time busy at its work of decomposition and death. Decay is slow combustion. But Scripture forewarns us of a day of fire when these processes shall be greatly quickened and intensified. Literal fire is the most active form of this dissolving energy. And Scripture makes it plain that it has its work to do in the coming transformation. There is to be a crisis and culmination in the history of creation when it shall break the fetters which have so long bound it and throw off the yoke of its bondage to corruption. The devil is to be first bound and finally destroyed. The devouring energy of nature, by which she destroys out of her system all that is evil, must reach finally this prince of all evil. She has prepared a furnace of fire for him. There was put into the system from the beginning a law and a power of self-purgation and emancipation.

The fire prepared for the devil and his angels then is the fire prepared for the renovation of the cosmos. The phrase brings before us a great fact of redemption, that it has been God's purpose from the beginning of all things to gather out of His kingdom of nature all things that offend and cast them into a furnace of fire. The devil and his angels are the evil powers of the system. And for them an eternal fire has been prepared.

Redeemed men are the chosen heirs and administrators of the renewed system. They are now translated

into it in spirit, and hereafter are to take on a glorified body suited to it. But those who refuse to submit to the redeeming grace and power of God must share the doom of the evil system to which they belong. They must go down with it into the grave of fire. We have before seen that this sinking into the abyss of dissolution is not only a judgment of the future. It is going on in the present. All decay and death are but the gnawing of the tooth of this eternal fire. At the coming of the Lord this consuming energy will burn more intensely against all evil and evil-doers. Refusing now the renovating baptism of the Holy Spirit, they must go down into the baptism of fire, with the devil and his angels.

We are not then to understand this sentence as merely a figure of future mental torment, nor are we to view it as a doom inflicted upon disembodied spirits nor upon resurrected men. It is the doom of things present. It closes up this earthly economy. It relates to the men who belong to this present order. It consigns them to its impending dissolution. It is essentially a death-sentence. For physical death is in obedience to the great law of dissolution impressed upon this present system. It is an anticipation of the eternal fire whose dissolving energy shall be more destructively let loose in the judgments that shall attend the Lord's second coming. And, as we have repeatedly insisted, it is a judgment preceding resurrection. It is the *living* nations who are viewed in this chapter as gathered before the Son of Man. The dead have already been consigned to the eternal fire. That is, they have been swallowed up in the grave of this consuming energy of nature in which the wrath of God burns

against all forms of creature life and all powers of evil in which sin resides.

This view of the issue of God's plan in Creation would be a dark one indeed if this gulf of fire were the end of all. But even this abyss is spanned by the hope of resurrection. A great and almost universal mistake has been made in placing this judgment-scene beyond the resurrection. It is true that the final casting of the devil and his angels into the lake of fire is put (Rev. xx.) beyond the resurrection. The complete renewal of all things belongs there. But in this scene only a fire *prepared* for the devil and his angels is brought to view. It is not said they are yet cast into it. Men at death, the nations who are devoured in the fiery judgments which shall wind up this present age, are consumed by the same dissolving energy which shall finally destroy the devil and his angels. It is the same age-during, eternal fire. But the judgment scene we have been contemplating is the winding up of an administration which the Lord assured His disciples was to begin in their own generation, which has been going on since then, and which relates, not to men after death, but to men before death. Their resurrection from the dead is not this side, but beyond this doom of fire. And therefore this abyss is spanned by this arch of hope. Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are already risen with Him. They stand on the farther shore of this sea of fire. But all others must go down beneath it. Their being must be dissolved in it. Their bodies consume away to dust, and their spirits become homeless and outcast. And even resurrection is not to them assured salvation. How immensely important then

that men should now believe on Jesus and accept His salvation. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life."

GOD'S ANGELS OF JUDGMENT.

The executioners of God's judgments, in Scripture language, are always spoken of as "angels." Especially does it represent the Son of Man as exercising His royal and judicial functions through the ministry of angels. When He passed into Heaven, "angels and authorities and powers" were made subject to Him. (1 Peter iii. 22.) When He comes in His glory to judge all nations, all the holy angels are with Him. (Matt. xxv. 31.) When He shall be revealed from Heaven, "the angels of His might" shall attend Him, in flaming fire. (2d Thess. i. 7.) In all the judgment scenes depicted in the Apocalypse, angels are the executers.

But no less strikingly does Scripture represent the powers of Nature as the agents in these judgments. The Lord who came at the flood with "myriads of His holy ones" to execute judgment upon the ungodly world, came also with mighty cataclysmic forces of Nature. The angels of judgment upon Egypt were lightning and tempest, famine and plague, darkness and hail, and noxious vermin. The angel that smote Jerusalem, after David's sinful numbering of the people, was a pestilence. The angels by which Jehovah fought for Israel and overthrew the Canaanites, were messengers

sent out from these same hidden chambers of Nature's forces, treasures of hail and thunder and earthquake reserved by Him against the day of battle and of war. (Job. xxxviii. 23.) And so in all the prophecies of future judgments, by which God shall deliver and restore Israel, and punish the nations and exalt His Church, and deliver the groaning creature, these same powers of Nature are the "angels" who appear upon the foreground in the battle-fields of the Lord God Almighty, and on the arena at every epoch of His judgments. The angels who attend the Son of Man in His judgment of the nations and His progress to universal dominion, are described in the Revelation as armed with lightnings and thunders and earthquakes and hail, as having "power over fire," over the sun, moon and stars, over the rivers and fountains of water, over the hidden sources of those noxious forms of creature life which often desolate the earth, and over all forms of disease and death. In this connection, it may be useful also to note that the "devil and his angels," as we have noticed in a previous article, are very closely connected in Scripture with those natural powers which work evil to man, and by which he is ground into the mire of sin and death; while the "holy angels," who are the especial attendants ugon the Son of Man, are those regenerative and purifying powers by which He shall finally accomplish "the restoration of all things." These were active agents in His ministry on earth, by means of which He brought health out of disease, food out of scarcity, calm out of tempest, and life out of death. But all angels, good and evil alike, are now subject to Him and execute His pur-

poses both of mercy and of judgment. While the evil shall finally be destroyed in the "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." All things shall be made new, and there shall be no more curse.

We have thus seen that the executive forces of God's throne, the angels of His rule and judgment, are the powers of Nature. By this, we do not mean that these angels are impersonal. Rather do we believe that these forces, which men in their blindness believe to be the insensate properties of matter, are vital, spiritual powers. If angels are not identical with these forces, they are at least closely identified with them. And this view brings the matter of angelic ministry very close to us. God's angels touch us, they bear us up in their hands, they administer His rebukes through this system of Nature, whose forces touch us at every point of our lives, and in every phase of our daily experience. And this view brings the kingdom and judgment of the Son of Man much nearer to us than we have imagined it. He is *now* Head over all principalities and powers. This whole realm of Nature, with all its forces, open and secret, is but the outward manifestation of His divine administration. Its forces are but the fingers on His hand by which He dispenses blessing or chastisement. His reign and judgment, therefore, are not only of the future. They are also of the present. "The angels of His might" are not merely winged and shining messengers from the far distant realms of space, who are to come into relation with the Earth's affairs at some great crisis of the future. They are here now, although unseen. The "coming" or "presence" of the Lord not only

draweth nigh. It is now here. It began with the generation which witnessed His ascension to the right hand of power. It is only because we are blind that we do not see it. There is, indeed, to come a time when the clouds shall be parted, the veil be rent. His now hidden glory shall be revealed. But we shall better understand the nature of this revelation, the manner of it and its accompaniments, if we would now learn to view the Son of Man as exalted to all power in this created system, with its forces as His angels, His kingdom as now administered through all its agencies, His judgment and consignment to blessing and to wrath, to life and to death, as going on in the present, as it will also be the great fact of the future. He rules and judges now, as we have seen from behind the clouds and with a veiled hand. Scripture everywhere warns us of a consummating crisis in the future when the clouds shall be brushed away and the hand disclosed. But these two conceptions of the "kingdom and the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" are not inconsistent. They are complementary. A right view of Him as *now* ruling and judging, "and all the holy angels with Him," will only the better prepare us for the day of the open manifestation of His kingdom. And it will lead us to expect this less along the line of strange portents and convulsions and sudden outbursts, and more along the line of such methods of divine working as are already known to our experience, and which have always attended His progress through judgment to victory. We shall best avoid the reproach, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth," if we shall learn to view Him as not now far away, but as hidden behind all the

outward forms of things with which we come into daily contact, and operating behind all the forces, natural and spiritual, which determine the course of events in the world around us. We are quite sure that the best preparation for the "coming of the Lord" will be that spiritual exaltation which will lift us now into a consciousness of His presence, and that spiritual sight which shall discern in all the powers of Nature the angels of His judgment, and in all the affairs of men and nations the signs of His approach. And, from this point of view, we cannot but regard the amazing progress which men are making in their knowledge of and control over the invisible powers of Nature as signs that the breaking down of the barriers between the visible and the invisible, which are now like sundered departments in God's universal kingdom, is near. This progress, indeed, is being skillfully made use of by the "god of this world" to foster in man the proud conceit that there is no God in Nature higher than himself, and that he needs no other Christ to effect the world's regeneration than his own progress and culture. But the crisis of the enemy's deceit is also the crisis of our Lord's triumph. And if man is proudly breaking through the veil to see what treasures for his own aggrandizement lie behind this curtain of visible things, the Lord Jesus is also pressing behind to break through with that manifestation of His glory which shall confound all His adversaries, and shall bless man with those rich bounties which lie treasured with Him in that hidden realm. There is increasing pressure then to break through the veil on both sides of it. And it must soon be rent. "The Lord is at hand."

NOTES ON CURRENT OPINIONS AND EVENTS.

THE "PRESBYTERIAN'S" CRITICISM. We have not space upon our pages for a reprint of the editorial review of the doctrine of this magazine which appeared in the *Presbyterian* of July 11th. As in the case of its previous criticism, published a few weeks ago, we have no complaint to make against the tone and spirit of the article. It is free from bitterness and the writer means to be fair.

It is a misfortune of all controversy that those who engage in it are apt to neglect the central doctrine involved, and to occupy themselves with its outposts and inferences. In this case the writer states correctly that a central point in our eschatological teaching is "Redemption through Resurrection." But his objections are not made directly against this principle itself, but rather against the inferences we have drawn from it, and the defences we have drawn around it in our "Answers to Correspondents." For it is from this part of the magazine that his quotations are drawn. Now we have stated before, and we desire to state again, that we are not so sure about our inferences and adjustments of this doctrine to other doctrines of Scripture. We are only sure about the doctrine itself. We have been drawn into this region of defence and adjustment more than we intended or desired. And this, not because the doctrine betrays any weakness in this region, but because in it we are liable to lose sight of the main point at issue. Our critic in the *Presbyterian* seeks to run out the doctrine that Resurrection is redemptive to a point where it seems to clash with our Lord's teaching concerning eternal punishment. At points remote from the centre of our inquiry he finds inconsistencies and proposes hard questions. Our only reply is, if the doctrine be true these inconsistencies and hard questions will in due time settle themselves.

We desire then to state again to our critic, and to all interested, the definite question which it was the design of this magazine to bring to the attention of the church. Our critic refers to the teaching of "Christ and his apostles." The point we have raised is that

the teaching of the New Testament concerning human destiny cannot be understood, and must not be interpreted, apart from the teaching of the Old Testament, and that a redemptive recovery to life of nations consigned to death and hell on account of their sins is taught there in some passages upon the surface, and in many more it is written as one of God's secrets between the lines. We trust we have no interest in this matter except for the honor of God's truth and Name. For this reason we are glad the *Presbyterian* has twice called attention to our teachings. We desire to hold up this doctrine before the church, and in the burning light of God's Word for its approval if true, for its rejection if false. And therefore we earnestly invite the *Presbyterian* and our brethren in the minisiry to examine it fully and fairly. We ask from each and all of them a candid answer, drawn from a study of the Bible, to these questions.

1. Do the Old Testament promises of blessing to "all nations" to "all generations" to "all the families of the earth," some of whom are specified, as e. g. Egypt, Assyria, (Ish. xix: 23–25.) Sodom, (Ezek. xvi: 53–63.) Ammon, Moab and Edom, (Jer, xlviii: 47, xlix: 6, 39,) relate merely to what these nations have already experienced, or to what some future generation of their descendants shall experience this side of death, or do they relate to blessings which shall come to them in virtue of Christ's redemption, which has secured for them all, in their own time and order, a resurrection from the dead?

2. Do not such passages as Hos. xiii: 9–14. Ezek. xxxvii, teach that even sinful and unregenerate Israel should some day be blessed with a deliverance that would reach them through their ransom from the grave and their redemption from death?

3. Does it not enter into the very idea of resurrection that it is a recovery from death, the wages of sin?

4. Are not our Lord's words concerning future punishment, Mark ix: 43–49, Luke xvi, (parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus,) Matt. xxv: 31–46, capable of being explained as referring to a punishment consequent upon death and *preceding* resurrection?

5. If the Old Testament teaching requires us to believe that the promised redemption contains blessing for even sinful generations

of the past, are we not required to interpret the New Testament teachings referred to in the way just indicated?

6. Does the whole Bible teaching therefore, Old Testament and New, warrant the belief that the condition of all classes and generations of mankind has been immutably fixed at death?

It is manifest that if this view of the place and meaning of resurrection in the divine economy be true it will require us to reconstruct our accepted Eschatology. We are anxious therefore that it shall receive a full discussion; not one which shall keep us skirmishing upon the outposts, but one which shall go to the heart of the inquiry.

THE ANDOVER SEMINARY.—The *Congregationalist*, in noticing the recent anniversary exercises at Andover, says regretfully: "The hope of a probation in the next life for those to whom the historic Christ has not been adequately presented in this life is now taught unhesitatingly. The notion also is suggested that Christ, in speaking of future awards and punishments, while giving no intimation that they are not endless, was referring rather to the quality of these states or conditions than to their permanence."

Without entering into the controversy which has arisen concerning the right of the professors at Andover to retain their places while teaching this doctrine, we have a few remarks to make upon the doctrine itself.

First, however, we call attention to the fact that this new departure shows how widespread and how important is the revolution which is going on in theological opinion all over the world. Views like these have, for some time, been recognized and tolerated in the Episcopal Church. They now have obtained foothold in the official teaching of the Congregationalists. The statement was given a short time ago in the *Independent*, upon the authority of Dr. E. Pressensé, that at a recent conference of the evangelical ministers in France, met to consider recent phases of eschatological opinion, no one was found to defend the old doctrine of endless punishment. A few advocated conditional immortality. The majority inclined to some form of ultimate restoration, with the possible extinction or decay into non-consciousness of a remnant

who are found incapable of eternal life. The drift of opinion toward the wider hope, even among the most conservative churches, would surprise us all, were the facts really known.

On the one hand it is alleged that this is an ominous sign of that widespread departure from the faith which, as Scripture warns us, will characterize the last times. On the other hand, there are many who believe that these more merciful views lie either on the surface or beneath the surface of Scripture, and who claim that the Spirit of Christ, in leading the church more into the mind of Christ, and into His life of compassion and self-sacrifice for the ignorant and the outcast, has led her to enlarge the horizon of her hope for the multitudes who have perished without the knowledge of Him. There is but one test, however, to which we must all submit our judgments in this matter, and that is the Word of God. We have, in many ways, given in these pages our reason for the belief that the testimony of the Bible, when studied in its completeness, is against the view that the condition of all classes of men, young and old, heathen and Christian, past generations and present, is everlastingly fixed at death. We find it impossible to reconcile this view with many Old Testament promises, in which blessings are promised to sinful nations for which no room can be found this side of death. Especially is it impossible to adjust this view to any right conception of the declared purpose of God to bring back again from the dead, each in their own turn and order, these generations of mankind.

And this brings us to the main point at which this Andover departure is open to criticism. It fails to put this hope of the resurrection of the dead in the right place in its system. It brings in its possible probation before resurrection, and its day of judgment after it, as if resurrection, for the unjust at least, had no other meaning and place in the divine economy than as a prelude to retribution. All this confuses the teaching of Scripture as to the nature of man, the wages of his sin, and the mode of redemption. Man is an *embodied* image of God. A disembodied spirit is not a man. The disembodied state is the death-state, and is itself retribution. The threatened punishment for sin lies, therefore, on this side of resurrection. The sinner does not go after death into a new state

of discipline and education, but into a state of punishment. It is true, indeed, this period of captivity to death may bring with it salutary lessons, as in the similar case of men confined in a human prison. But we do not say of such prisoners that they are having a "second trial," or a "new probation." They are suffering punishment, serving out their sentence. This New Theology, therefore, tends to conceal from men that their danger is imminent. It soothes them with the hope of a deferred sentence. Whereas our Lord's warnings of punishment in hell relate to a doom closely impending. The rich man went at once to the place of torment. The judgment (Matt. xxv.) by which the wicked are consigned to "eternal fire" is executed upon *living* nations. The sentence is pronounced before and not after death. Indeed we cannot avoid the conclusion, from a study of the whole discourse, that the kingdom and the judgment of the Son of Man there referred to, began with his ascension to the right hand of power. To postpone it, therefore, until after a general resurrection in the far distant future is to take away from it that moral power which this view of its immediateness is calculated to give.

Whatever hope, therefore, may lie in the future for mankind must be sought beyond this region of judgment. The sentence against man is: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The sentence in Matt. xxv. is essentially a death-sentence. This judgment of God is inexorable. If redemption ever reaches man, it can only be after judgment has been executed.

And just here comes in the promise of resurrection. It is in the fact that provision has been made for the redemption of all mankind from death, that the star of hope is seen to arise over this dark prospect. This universal resurrection is not universal salvation. Resurrection contains within itself a law of judgment. Its great harvest must proceed according to the universal law of sowing and reaping. But it enters into the very idea of it that it is deliverance from the prison-house of death, the Sheol of the Old Testament, the Hades of the New, in whose gloomy caverns lay the Gehenna of torment (Luke xvi. 23). What this New Theology therefore needs, in order to place its "larger hope" upon a solid foundation of Scripture, is to examine anew the place and meaning of

resurrection in the Christian scheme, and especially the bearing of this "hope" upon the future of those countless myriads of men who have gone down to death without ever having heard of Christ, and who yet must be included in the "all nations" to whom He, as the promised seed, was to bring blessing. But it must do away with its theory of a prolonged trial after death and a suspended judgment, and press home upon the consciences of men who refuse Christ, that the wrath of God is *now* revealed from heaven against all their unrighteousness and ungodliness, and that a pit of destruction is *now* yawning beneath them, into which they will be plunged at death, unless they lay hold by faith upon the only Saviour. And in order to do this, it needs to do away with the impression that by "the next life" it means life in a disembodied state, which is the state of death and punishment in hell, and to define "the next life" as the life succeeding judgment and introduced by resurrection.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A ministerial brother writes that he has at length discovered that we "are in favor of annihilation as the solution of the problem of future evil." He then asks, if this be true, "why is Satan not already annihilated? What is the good of keeping wicked men and devils in existence another hour? How can a kind, wise and powerful being, like the God we call 'Our Father in Heaven,' permit this state of things to continue for another moment? If the incorrigibly wicked are to be finally annihilated, what is the use of all this intermediate machinery of the gospel, the atonement, the resurrection? If they are dead already, why not let them stay dead? Your interpretation of the acts of God, to my mind, disparages His character more even than mine."

To all this we reply,

1. Our position with reference to the doctrine of conditional immortality has been throughout to accept it only as a help toward the final solution of the problem of human destiny. There is too much yet to be learned, both from science and from scripture, of

the nature of man and of his place in this system of Creation, for any one to be sure that this, or any other proposed solution, is the final one. We believe, however, that we take an important step in the right direction when we come to see that there is no ground, either in scripture or in science, for the view that every individual of the human race, from the moment of his birth, is endowed with immortality. Notwithstanding all that may be said concerning the wide use of the terms "life" and "death" in Scripture, we must still believe that God only hath immortality, and that we become immortal only as we become partakers of His nature. If there is any truth plainly declared it is that eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. This does not imply, however, that the saved in Christ are the only class who survive death. It is plainly taught that He has redeemed all men to a life beyond the grave and that all will be raised from the dead. At this point we differ from the theory referred to. Its advocates have usually regarded the resurrection of the unjust as a preliminary to their final destruction. In our view this is wholly inconsistent with the intent and meaning of resurrection, and especially with the view of death which is essential in this theory. Resurrection belongs to the opposite pole in the divine economy. It is recovery to life out of death, which is the wages of sin. It must therefore bring with it the blessings and the possibilities of life.

3. There are, however, two orders of resurrection. The one is defined as "unto life," the other as "unto judgment." Those then who are not raised in eternal life, receive a life and embodiment which, like man's present life, is under condemnation. And that some of this class never rise above this condition, is inferred from the fact that they suffer "the second death." Such must have proved themselves incorrigible and incapable of eternal life. And therefore this death would seem to be final and total.

4. That the destruction of this class would be more disparaging to the character of God than their endless existence in the agonies of an endless hell we cannot conceive.

As to why, if this is to be their end, God does not at once destroy them we are not bound to answer. "The Lord hath created all

things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." The question is pertinent only as it assumes that God has shut himself up to some necessity of continuing the wicked in endless being, and that therefore, in order to save them from an endless woe, He has put in operation "the intermediate machinery of the gospel." We cannot believe that God is under any such necessity. If we did, we should have to believe, with Plato, that human souls were pre-existently immortal. He who *created* can *destroy*. Nor do we believe the atonement to be a device to help Him out of any such dilemma. The record of the gospel is that, while men have justly forfeited all right to life, God has given to us eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. He that hath the Son hath this life. He that hath not the Son hath not life.

It is not fair to speak of this final loss of being as "annihilation." This term presupposes that the creature deprived of life had been endowed with immortality. Whereas the primary principle of this theory is that man is not naturally immortal and that he finally perishes by the law of his own being, unless he becomes grafted into the new manhood of which Christ is the root. No substance in nature, either of matter or of spirit, can be annihilated. But the form or organism it has assumed may be destroyed. Hence this final destruction of sinful man may be a destruction *qua homo*. Dr. Whedon, in a recent article in the *Independent* speaks of it as a possible "deconsciousization." It will be perceived then that while we accept the primary principle of this doctrine that only life in Christ is eternal, we do not accept all its conclusions. There are certain things hinted at in Scripture concerning the relation of individual life to the life of the race, concerning the organic unity of families, concerning the first-born's right and duty of redemption, and hence of the relation of the elect class of this dispensation to those of their brethren who have lost their crown of life and their heritage, and concerning God's hidden ways of redemption, as to make us pause before we conclude upon any theory which defines so closely as does this His ways of judgment.